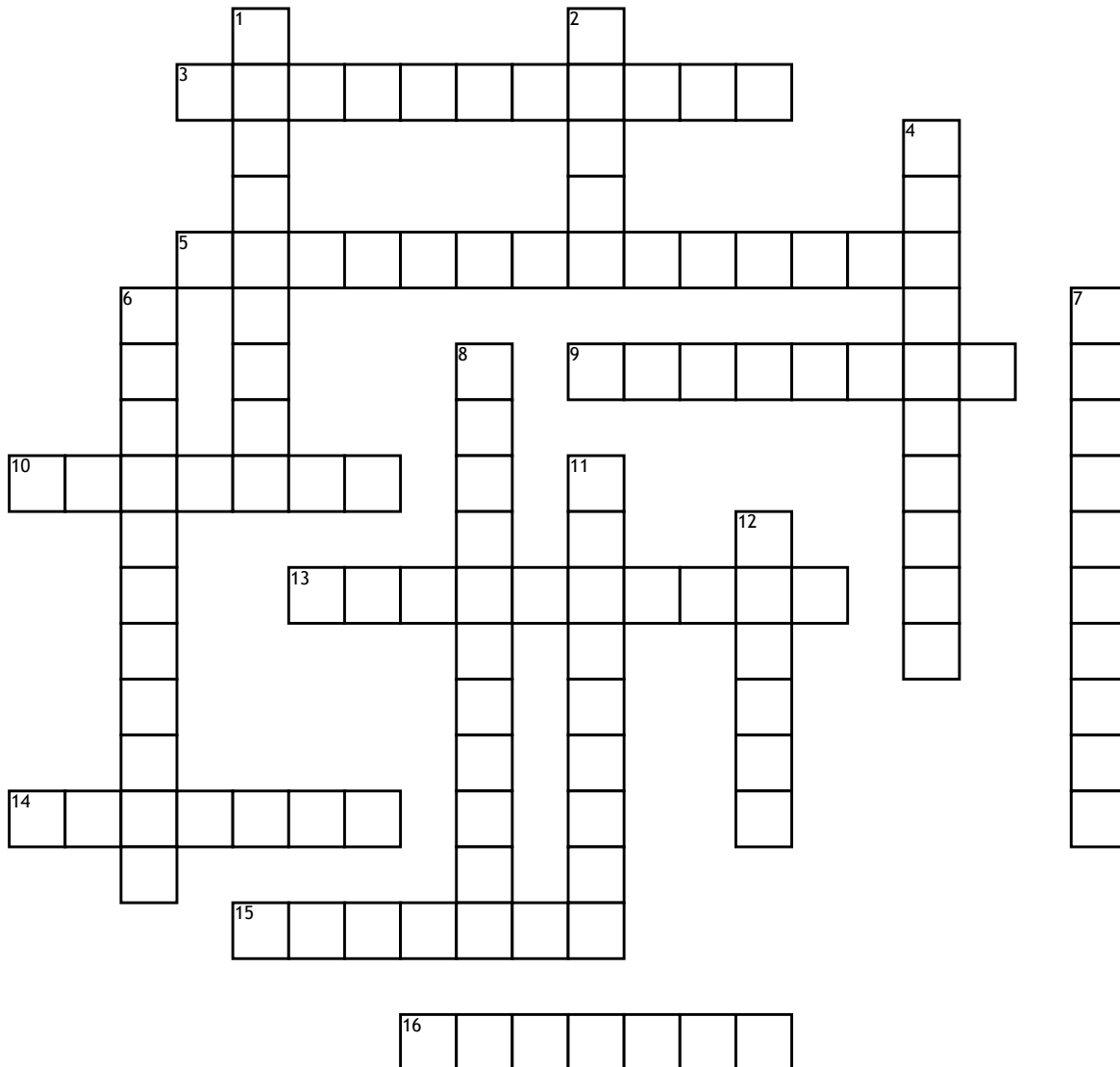


Why I Write



Across

3. In high school, my English teacher was so glad to have one student that showed some interest in writing. The fewer teeth you have to pull to get decent papers out of kids the better, I guess. She told me about Tolkein's group, The Inklings. I started to envision a community of writers that could discuss both their own work and great writing of other authors. I wrote essays about Jane Eyre, Jay Gatsby and others, and dreamed of a day when I could find like-minded people to discuss writing with. (point of view)

5. The glorious mess that is creative writing captures life in a word snapshot. Even if life changes, stories and memories can be pulled out and enjoyed through new lenses. My continuing development as a writer has been a slow journey, but a fulfilling one. I still love the rigid structure of academic writing. I also love the expressiveness of creative writing. While it may never be possible to completely recapture the joy and creativity I had towards writing when I was younger, one thing is sure: Mom was right, I was born to write. (learning to be ok with yourself)

9. Maybe I had a little Stephanie Meyer in me. "We're going to get married and leave Oklahoma!" I remember telling a friend. She looked skeptical. Turns out she was right, and in a few months that boy didn't matter anymore. The stories I had written were thrown out with the postcard and the rest of the day's trash. (growing up ends in _____)

10. The diary form was too rigid, and I have eight or ten on a shelf that only have the first four or five pages written on. Maybe because I was the only audience of my diary, it seemed like too much pressure. No one was going to grade it, so it would never get better, and it also wasn't due, so why bother with it? I wanted to be an author, but the stories I wrote made no sense. I wasn't aware of it, but I was looking for creative nonfiction. (ability to choose)

13. The stories I made up from pictures in books before I could read the words were seldom fantastic and tended to be fact-based, just like my pretend research. (art is self-_____)

14. It wasn't rigid. Truth in true stories was a much more fluid concept at that age, and we often told our stories from the premise that we were reporting facts rather than what we considered to be storytelling. (truth in fact or feeling)

15. The narrative style was a little weak. But, the research was strong, the grammar acceptable, and the requirements satisfied. I was only a freshman, but I almost changed majors because I didn't think I could face four more years of academic writing. I hit a patch where I could barely write a sentence. The joy of writing was gone for me, I thought, forever. (working through old problems in a healthy way)

16. I was born to write. Mama told me even when I was little, I would take all the junk mail that we received and highlight portions of it as my "research." Long before I knew what research was, or had ever read my first academic article, I was preparing to be a writer. My sister Leah was the victim of many "lectures" I had prepared over my "research." (movement through time, space or mentality)

Down

1. Rather than making up a brand-new story from scratch, true stories could be rinsed off and repurposed into fresh and beautiful ones. The pieces still had many literary elements, such as metaphors, symbolism, and scenic writing. (the feeling of newness one gets after writing)

2. Although we would sometimes play music in between our commentary like we'd heard other DJs do on the radio, often we would just record our conversations or stories we had prepared from "research." Many of these clips are cringeworthy, but they also show how much differently I saw writing at that point. (applies to fashion as well as writing)

4. When we were about eleven, my best friend and I discovered podcasts. Now, we didn't know that's what they were, but we would go down into the damp basement with my MP3 player and record ourselves pretending to be DJs. "You're listening to KHJK radio!" we would say, "And here's the story of what really happened to neighbor's dog!" (a different way of creating something)

6. As time marched on and I started college, I still thought the only writing I like was research-based essays. Comp II was not terribly challenging. I followed the instructions meticulously and wrote the best research paper on mandatory GMO labeling practices I could. (a change)

7. Keeping a diary was never for me. Something about it seemed too solemn, like I was writing the first draft of history or something, so it had to be a chronological list of true events, exactly as they happened. Now, who exactly I thought would be interested enough to read my diary in a hundred years is a mystery. I certainly don't want to read about the pre-teen crushes of people long dead. (style, rigidity of writing)

8. I was thirteen, and I was in love. The postcard he brought from Oregon was bent and torn, probably from the hundreds of miles it had travelled in his hoodie pocket. I held it up, admiring the cheery red leaves and blue sky on the front. Mom and Dad told me I was too young to be dating and that it would never work out with this boy, so I wrote stories in old notebooks about star-crossed lovers who had to leave their families for their love to happen, before dying tragic and glorious deaths. (controversial optional punctuation)

11. Two semesters later, I had my first taste of "sanctioned" creative writing and realized I do like to write. Creative nonfiction was an eye-opener for me. We worked on defining words that didn't exist, making a poem out of song lyrics or bumper stickers, and more traditional essay writing. (learning something new or finding something out)

12. It didn't take much exposure to realize that academic writing was my strong suit. Even though it was higher pressure than writing for myself, unlike keeping a diary, it followed a set formula and was based upon carefully researched facts. To me, this orderly way of approaching writing made sense. There was no need to be creative, and even though I wasn't the type who could make a cohesive story up, I could still do well with research papers. After all, there was a right and a wrong answer, with much less room for subjectivity. For several years, the only writing I kept was those papers I had written, most of them for a grade. My writing style had become neat and precise, with lots of big words that I thought made it sound more credible. (rigid or academic)